

During the last decades of the 19th century surveys were conducted for the possibility of improving navigation through Bogue Inlet and on the White Oak River. In 1884 and 1889, Captain W. H. Bixby of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE] conducted examinations of the river and inlet and concluded that existing and projected commerce through the region justified improvements. He recommended that "a navigable channel be provided for steamboats from the mouth of the river twenty-nine miles upstream to Sabiston's Bridge. ...that a channel for flat boats be provided for an additional twenty-one miles to Collins Ford (Anglely 1984:9). These recommended improvements, however, were never enacted.

Additional attempts were made by local interests to promote improvements to the inlet and travel on the White Oak River. In 1896, Swansboro residents and the Swansboro Lumber Company pushed for the construction of a jetty west of Dudley Island with the hopes of "eliminating interior shoals and obtaining a channel eight feet deep at high water from Bogue Inlet to Swansboro" (Anglely 1984:10). A study by the USACE, however, concluded that though the region's commerce was still significant much of its trade passed through Bogue Sound to Beaufort rather than out Bogue Inlet. The project was rejected as a consequence. In 1907 and again in 1915, residents requested Congress for improvements on the White Oak. Despite a volume of trade of 21,532 tons in 1906, the USACE determined that the prospect of future growth was limited and that existing connections and the expansion of the Intracoastal Waterway would provide the desired outlet for the region's trade (Anglely 1984:13-14).

In 1905, a lifesaving station was established on the western tip of Bogue Bank. Because of the value of commerce plying the eastern seaboard of the United States the station was built to fill in the gap between facilities located at Cape Lookout and Cape Fear. The need for the station was well founded. Prior to its construction two schooners, the *Carrie L. Davis* and the *Thomas L. James*, went ashore at the inlet resulting in the loss of both vessels and their cargoes (Anglely 1984:12). Additional vessels were lost and aided by station personnel after its construction including the 307-ton steamer *Governor Safford* (1908), the 18-ton schooner *M. B. Davis* (1917) and the 132-ton schooner *Morris and Cliff* (1926).

During the 1920s and 1930s, construction began on the Intracoastal Waterway, a protected waterway traversing the entire eastern seaboard of the United States. It was hoped that the waterway would facilitate coastal trade and open areas of the coast that had little access to transportation outlets. The segment passing through Onslow County was 12-feet deep and 90 feet wide. In 1938, six years after being completed, approximately 8,500 motor vessels, 200 barges and 300 tugs were crossing Onslow's waters (Watson 1995:117). Though water remained the principal method of transportation a number of new, paved roads began to appear in the county, spurred by the introduction of the automobile. In 1924, Route 17 crossed through the county following the old Colonial Post Road and in 1934, Route 24 was completed. The railroads also expanded during this period. However, most catered to the lumber industry and were short in length,